

Essay on social influences on behavior

Psychology, Behaviorism



Social Influences on Behavior Somchai Knorr Grantham University Social Influences on Behavior “ Sociologists and philosophers had recognized that people behave differently in crowds than they do as individuals and that a crowd is more than the mere sum of its parts” (Kowalski & Western, 2005). Human behavior changes based on social situations individuals may encounter, and these encounters may begin as early as toddler years. Individuals learn to adapt to society by changing their behavior in order to “ fit in” with the rest of the crowd.

Two examples of how an individual’s behavior changes based on social situations are when a) a person decides to drink liquor at a social event. The second example of when an individual’s behavior changes based on social situations is b) when a person decides to smoke marijuana or cigarettes. One may see these behaviors in an individual who regularly does not behave like so when they are trying to act like “ everyone else. ” These behaviors may be seen in situations such as a party, a club, or a popular social event, where an individual will find it fitting to behave differently to receive recognition from other social crowds.

Precursors and Consequences “ When he first arrived on campus at age 18, he figured he had to drink if he wanted to fit in, even though the legal drinking age is 21” (Wilson, 2008). Students, especially in colleges and universities, find themselves in situations where they believe they have to take part in drinking and partying to get approval from the rest of the student body to increase their self-esteem and popularity. An example of social comparison would be a student drinking and smoking to fit in with the crowd.

Adults may also find themselves peer pressured to drink alcohol or smoke when taking part in extracurricular activities, such as going out to clubs or attending social events, to feel relaxed or content. Drinking and smoking is advertised on a daily basis as a way of “enjoying the party.” One example that I have observed would be with the recent kick off of the American football season. My television sets are invaded with beer commercials emphasizing on how fans seem to enjoy the game more when they are drinking a beer, when I visit my local Wal-Mart or Publix, there is an area designed just for football fans made of beer products.

Social psychology concepts concentrate on the individual and the situation in which that individual is in. As mentioned above, self-esteem is one of the examples that apply to individuals who use liquor, marijuana or tobacco as a coping mechanism. The self-concept of one not being able to function correctly without the liquor or the tobacco in their system is another concept of social psychology. In the long run the individual is at risk of affecting his or her health, their education, and their social standing.

Associated Phenomenon Phenomenon's such as social facilitation and social influence have been associated with behaviors, such as drinking and smoking in social events. Social influence “Social influence, effects of the presence of others on the way people think, feel, and behave” (Kowalski & Westen, 2005). Social influence is associated with both behaviors because the changes in behaviors are due to the attitudes of others or guidance towards a particular direction, in this case the drinking and smoking of tobacco or marijuana.

Another example of how social influence affects the behavior of an individual in guiding them towards smoking or drinking with the perception that getting involved is pleasurable and accepted widely among other peers. One might find themselves as the only person the group of peers that does not smoke or drink, at one point or another they will involve themselves in the same activities because everyone else is drinking and smoking and they have not had any severe apparent consequences.

When it becomes a routine for everyone around oneself to party constantly and go on drinking and smoking binges, conformity is another phenomenon that occurs because this person is accommodating themselves to standards of the rest of the group. Social facilitation Social facilitation is another phenomenon that is associated to individuals who use drinking and smoking as an excuse to behave in a certain way. Individuals use drinking as a way to express their feelings better in a group of people or towards a certain individual.

For example, when a person drinks while out at a club or a party, they may feel as if they have the confidence to approach others they may find attractive or laugh and dance within the group of partygoers. “ Small amounts of alcohol might dull painful feelings” (C. A. M. H. , 2008). Just as individuals use drinking and smoking as a way to feel happy and relaxed others use these substances to feel numb. Individuals use alcohol as a gateway to forgetting any traumatic events in their lives such as being sexually, physically, or emotionally abused.

The stress of dealing with other individuals, like a significant other, a parent, or a child, with mental or health issue also leaves behind emotional distress, and one may feel that the way of dealing with the stress is to drink. Recently a close friend started smoking cigarettes; I questioned her on why she had taken on this habit. Her response left me flabbergasted; it seemed ridiculous to me, that she had taken on this habit because it was a way of dealing with the stress of having three children at the age of 21.

Therapeutic Intervention
When an individual or an individual's family and friends consider therapeutic intervention it is for the simple fact that the behavior has escalated to an uncontrollable degree. When an individual loses control of his or her life, the therapeutic intervention is what provides the guidance, reasoning, and inspiration for the person to make the needed changes to get back on track. The determining factor of whether a person should consider therapeutic intervention or not is the frequency and quantity of alcohol, tobacco, or marijuana is consuming.

Another determining factor would be the reason of why this individual has taken on this behavior. As mentioned earlier, many people begin smoking marijuana or cigarettes and begin drinking alcohol when they have encountered stressful situations as well as having to deal with traumatic events. **Conclusion** As examined, behaviors such as smoking and drinking are changed endured by humans based on social situations they encounter. Social situations such as parties or traumatic past events may trigger oneself to act a certain way or take on new habits.

Individuals may feel that by partaking in certain activities their social standings will improve. Unfortunately, if the right amount of self control is not applied an individual may find oneself overwhelmed and become addicted to a substance or lifestyle. References Centre for Addiction and Mental Health. PAHO. (2008). Retrieved October 11, 2009, from http://www.camh.net/About_Addiction_Mental_Health/Drug_and_Addiction_Information/Women_and_Alcohol/alcohol_feelings.html Thadani, Vandana; Huchting, Karen; LaBrie, Joseph. (2009, August 1).

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